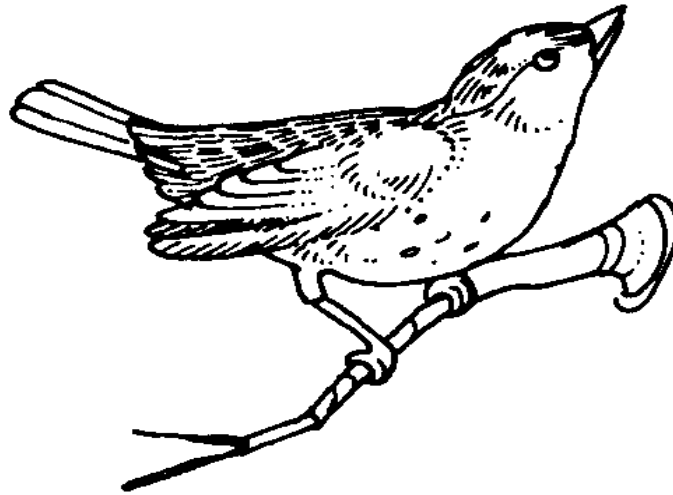


***STORIES & POEMS FOR
CHILDREN
APRIL 2015***



APRIL

April, April, are you here?

Oh! how fresh the wind is blowing!

See! The sky is bright and clear;

Oh! how green the grass is growing!

*--Dora Reed Goodale**

WHEN THE BLUEBERRIES ARE RIPE

from: *The House in the Water - A Book of Animal Stories*, by Charles G. D. Roberts
EBook #29839

THE steep, rounded, rock-scarred face of Bald Mountain, for all its naked grimness, looked very cheerful in the last of the warm-coloured sunset. There were no trees; but every little hollow, every tiny plateau, every bit of slope that was not too steep for clinging roots to find hold, was clothed with a mat of blueberry bushes. The berries, of an opaque violet-blue tone (much more vivid and higher in key than the same berries can show when picked and brought to market) were so large and so thickly crowded as to almost hide the leaves. They gave the austere steeps of "Old Baldy" the effect of having been dyed with a wash of cobalt.

Far below, where the lonely wilderness valley was already forsaken by the sun, a flock of ducks could be seen, with long, outstretched necks rigid and short wings swiftly beating, lined out over a breadth of wild meadow. Above the lake which washed the foot of the mountain,--high above the water, but below the line of shadow creeping up the mountain's face,--a single fish-hawk circled slowly, waiting for the twilight coolness to bring the big trout to the surface to feed. The smooth water glimmered pallidly, and here and there a spreading, circular ripple showed that the hungry fish were beginning to rise.

Up in the flood of the sunset, the blueberries basked and glowed, some looking like gems, some like blossoms, according to the fall of the light. Around the shoulder of the mountain toward the east, where the direct rays of the sun could not reach, the light was yet abundant, but cool and tender,--and here the vivid berries were beginning to lose their colour, as a curved moon, just rising over the far, ragged rim of the forest, touched them with phantom silver. Everywhere jutting rocks and sharp crevices broke the soft mantle of the blueberry thickets; and on the southerly slope, where sunset and moonrise mingled with intricate shadows, everything looked ghostlike and unreal. On the utmost summit of the mountain a rounded peak of white granite, smoothed by ages of storm, shone like a beacon.

The only berry-pickers that came to these high slopes of Bald Mountain were the wild kindreds, furred and feathered. Of them all, none were more enthusiastic and assiduous than the bears; and just now, climbing up eagerly from the darkening woods below, came an old she-bear with two half-grown cubs. They came up by easy paths, zigzagging past boulder and crevice, through the ghostly, noiseless contention of sunlight and moonlight. Now their moving shadows lay one way, now the other; and now their shadows were suddenly wiped out, as the two lights for a moment held an even balance. At length having reached a

little plateau where the berries were particularly large and close-clustered, the old bear stopped, and they fell joyously to their feeding.

On these open heights there were no enemies to keep watch against, and there was no reason to be wary or silent. The bears fed noisily, therefore, stripping the plump fruit cleverly by the pawful, and munching with little, greedy grunts of delight. There was no other food quite so to their taste as these berries, unless, perhaps, a well-filled honey-comb. And this was their season for eating, eating, eating, all the time, in order to lay up abundant fat against the long severity of winter.

As the bushes about them were stripped of the best fruit, the shaggy feasters moved around the shoulder of the mountain from the gold of the sun into the silver of the moon. Soon the sunset had faded, and the moon had it all her own way except for a broad expanse of sea-green sky in the west, deepening through violet to a narrow streak of copper on the horizon. By this time the shadows, especially on the eastern slope, were very sharp and black, and the open spaces very white and radiant, with a strange transparency borrowed from that high, pure atmosphere.

It chanced that the little hollow on which the bears were just now revelling,--a hollow where the blueberries were unbelievably large and abundant--was bounded on its upper side, toward the steep, by a narrow and deep crevice. At one end of the cleft, from a rocky and shallow roothold, a gnarled birch grew slantingly. From its unusual situation, and from the fact that the bushes grew thick to its very edge, this crevice constituted nothing less than a most insidious trap.

One of the cubs, born with the instinct of caution, kept far away from the dangerous brink without having more than half realized that there was any danger there whatever. The other cub was one of those blundering fellows, to be found among the wild kindreds no less than among the kindreds of men, who only get caution hammered into them by experience. He saw a narrow break, indeed, between the berry patch and the bare steep above,--but what was a little crevice in a position like this, where it could not amount to anything? Had it been on the other side of the hollow, he would have feared a precipice, and would have been on his guard. But, as it was, he never gave the matter a second thought, because it did not look dangerous! He found the best berries growing very near the edge of the crevice; and in his satisfaction he turned his back to the height and settled himself solidly upon his haunches to enjoy them. As he did so the bushes gave way behind him, he pitched abruptly backwards, and vanished with a squeal of terror into the narrow cleft of darkness.

The crevice was perhaps twelve feet deep, and from five to eight in

width all the way to the bottom. The bottom held a layer of earth and dead leaves, which served to ease the cub's fall; but when he landed the wind was so bumped out of him that for a minute or two he could not utter a sound. As soon as he recovered his voice, however, he began to squeal and whine piteously for his mother.

The old bear, at the sound of his cry as he fell, had rushed so hastily to his aid that she barely escaped falling in after him. Checking herself just in time, by digging all her mighty claws into the roots of the blueberries, she crouched at the brink, thrust her head as far over as she could, and peered down with anxious cries. But when the cub's voice came back to her from the darkness she knew he was not killed, and she also knew that he was very near,--and her whinings changed at once to a guttural murmur that must have been intended for encouragement. The other cub, meanwhile, had come lumbering up with ears wisely cocked, taken a very hasty and careful glance over the edge, and returned to his blueberries with an air of disapproval. It was as if he said he always knew that blundering brother of his would get himself into trouble.

For some minutes the old bear crouched where she was, straining her eyes to make out the form of her little one. Becoming accustomed to the gloom at last, she could discern him. She could see that he was moving about, and standing on his hind legs, and striving valiantly to claw his way up the perpendicular surface of smooth rock. She began to reach downwards first one big forepaw and then the other, testing the rock beneath her for some ledge or crack that might give her foothold by which to climb down to his aid. Finding none, she again set up her uneasy whining, and moved slowly along the brink, trying every inch of the way for some place rough enough to give her strong claws a chance to take hold. In the full, unclouded light of the white moon she was a pathetic figure, bending and crouching and straining, and reaching down longingly, then stopping to listen to the complaints of pain and terror that came up out of the dark.

At last she came to the end of the crevice where grew the solitary birch tree,--the frightened captive following exactly below her and stretching up toward her against the rock. At this point, close beside the tree, some roots and tough turf overhung the edge, and the old bear's paws detected a roughness on the face of the rock just below. This was enough for her brave and devoted heart. She turned around and let her hind quarters carefully over the brink, intending to climb down backwards as bears do. But beyond the first unevenness there was absolutely nothing that her claws could take hold of. Her great body was half way over, when she felt herself on the point of falling. Making a sudden startled effort to recover herself, she clutched desperately at the trunk of the birch tree with one arm, at the roots of the berry-bushes with the other,--and just managed to regain the level.

For herself, this mighty effort was just enough. But for the birch-tree it was just too much. The shallow earth by which it held gave way; and the next moment, with a clatter of loosened stones and a swish of leafy branches, it crashed majestically down into the crevice, closing one end of it with a mass of boughs and foliage, and once more frightening the imprisoned cub almost out of his senses.

At the first sound of this cataclysm, at the first rattle of loose earth about his ears, the cub had bounced madly to the other end of the crevice, where he crouched, whimpering. The old bear, too, was daunted for some seconds; but then, seeing that the cub was not hurt, she was quick to perceive the advantage of the accident. Standing at the upturned roots of the tree, she called eagerly and encouragingly to the cub, pointing out the path of escape thus offered to him. For some minutes he was too terrified to approach. At last she set her own weight on the trunk, testing it, and prepared to climb down and lead him out. At this, however, the youngster's nerve revived. With a joyful and understanding squeal, he rushed forward, sprawled and clawed his way over the tangle of branches, gained the firm trunk,--and presently found himself again beside his mother among the pleasant, moonlit berry-bushes. Here he was fondled and nosed and licked and nursed by the delighted mother, till his bruised little body forgot its hurts and his shaken little heart its fears. His cautious brother, too, came up with a wise look and sniffed at him patronizingly; but went away again with his nose in the air, as if to say that here was much fuss being made over a very small matter.

THE WOLF AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

[Swedish.]

In ancient times, when matters went on in the world very differently from what they now do, there reigned a king in Scotland who had the loveliest queen that ever graced a throne. Her beauty and amiability were such, that her praise was sung by every minstrel and tale-teller, and they called her the Scottish phoenix. This fair queen bore to her husband two children, a son and a daughter, and then died in the prime of her youth.

The king mourned for her many years, and could not forget her; he even said that he would never marry again. But human resolutions are unstable, and can never be depended on; and after the lapse of years, when the children were already grown up, he took to himself a second wife. The new queen was an evil-disposed woman, and made indeed a step-mother to the king's children. Yet the prince and princess were mirrors of grace and loveliness, and this was the cause of their step-mother's hatred of them; for the people, who loved the memory of the former queen, were constantly praising the young people, but never said anything about her; and whenever she appeared in public with the young princess, they always applauded and welcomed the latter, exclaiming, "She is good and fair like her mother." This roused her jealousy; she was full of spite towards them, and pondered how she might play them some evil trick; but she concealed the malignity of her heart under the mask of friendliness, for she dared not let the king perceive that she was ill-disposed towards them, and the nation would have stoned her and torn her in pieces if she had done them any harm.

The princess, who was called Aurora, was now fifteen years of age, blooming as a rose, and the fairest princess far and near. Many kings' sons, princes and counts, courted her and sought her hand; but she replied to them all, "I prefer my merry and unfettered girlhood to any lover," and thereupon they had nothing to do but to return from whence they came.

At last, however, the right one came. He was a prince from the East, a handsome and majestic man, and to him she was betrothed with the consent and approbation of the king and of her step-mother. Already the bridal wreath was twined; musicians were hired for the dance, and the whole nation rejoiced at the approaching nuptials of the fair Princess Aurora. But far other thoughts were in the queen's heart, and with threatening gestures she said to herself, "I will hire musicians who shall play a very different tune, and those feet shall dance elsewhere than in the bridal chamber. For," continued she, "this throws me quite in the shade, and my sun must set before this Aurora;

especially now that she is going to have such a stately man for her husband, and will give descendants to her father, for I am childless. The nation, too, delights in her, and receives her with acclamation, but takes no note of me. Yet I am the queen: yes, I am the queen, and soon all shall know that it is I who am queen, and not Aurora."

And she meditated day and night how she might ruin the princess and her brother; but not one of her wicked plans succeeded, for they were too well guarded by their attendants, who valued them like the apple of their eye, and never left them day nor night, because of the dear love they bore to their mother, the departed queen.

At length the bridal day arrived, and the queen having no more time to lose, bethought herself of the most wicked art she knew, and approaching the young people in the most friendly way possible, begged them to go with her into the rose-garden, where she would show them a wonderfully beautiful flower which had just opened. Willingly they went with her, for the garden was close to the palace, and no one suspected any evil, for it was only mid-day, and the king and the grandees of the land were all assembled in the great hall of the palace where the nuptials were to be solemnised.

The queen led her step-children to the furthest corner of the garden where grew her flowers, till they came beneath a dark yew tree, where she pretended to have something particular to show to them. Then she murmured to herself some words in a low tone, broke off a branch from the tree, and with it gave some strokes on the backs of the prince and princess. Immediately they were transformed. The prince, in the shape of a raging wolf, sprang over the wall and ran into the forest; and the princess as a grey bird, called a nightingale, flew into a tree and sang a melancholy air.

So well did the queen play her part, that no one suspected anything. She ran shrieking to the castle, and with rent clothes and dishevelled hair sank on the steps of the hall, acting as if some great disaster had befallen her, and by the king's command her women carried her to her chamber. A full quarter of an hour passed ere she came to herself. Then she assumed an attitude of grief, wept, and exclaimed, "Ah, poor Aurora, what a bridal day for thee! Ah, unfortunate prince!"

After repeatedly exclaiming in this manner, she at length related that a band of robbers had suddenly burst into the garden, and had forcibly torn the royal children from her arms, and carried them off; that they had struck herself to the ground and left her half dead; and she then showed a swelling on her forehead, to produce which she had purposely hit her head against a tree. They all believed her words, and the king commanded all the great lords, and counts, and knights, and squires, to mount their horses and pursue the robbers. They traversed the forest in all directions, and visited every cave, and rock, and

mountain, for at least three miles round the palace, but they could not find a trace of either the robbers or the prince and princess. The king, however, could not rest, and caused further search and enquiries to be made, for weeks and months; and he sent messengers into all the countries he could think of; but all was in vain, and at length it was as if the prince and princess had never been in existence, so entirely had they disappeared.

The old king, however, thought that the robbers had been tempted by the fine jewels that the prince and princess wore on the wedding day, and that they had stripped them of those and then murdered them, and buried their bodies in some secret place: this so grieved him that he shortly after died. On his death-bed, as he had no children, he bestowed his kingdom on his wife, and besought his subjects to be true and obedient to her as they had been to him. They gave their promise, and acknowledged her as queen, more out of love for him than for her.

Thus four years passed away, when, in the second year after the king's death, the queen began to govern with great rigour; and with the treasures the king had left behind him, she hired foreign soldiers whom she brought over the sea to guard her and to keep watch over the palace; for she knew that she was not beloved by her subjects, and she said, "That they should now do out of fear what they would not do for love."

And so it came to pass, that from day to day she became more hated by every one, but nobody durst show his hate, for the slightest whisper against her was punished with death. Nevertheless, the murmurs and whispers still went on; and it was commonly said among the people, that the queen had a hand in the children's disappearance; for, in truth, there were plenty of persons who, on account of her sharp eyes and her affected love for the children, suspected her of evil practices against them. These murmurs, so far from dying away, went on increasing; but the queen cared not for them, and thought "they will remain the brutes into which I have transformed them, and no one will deprive me of the crown." However, things turned out otherwise than she expected.

Meanwhile the poor royal children led a sorry life. The prince had fled to the forest as a grey wolf, and was obliged to conduct himself like a wolf, and howl like one too, and by day to wander about in desolate places, and to prowl about at night like a thief; for wolfish fear had also sprung up in his heart. And also, he was obliged to live like other wolves, on all sorts of prey--on wild animals and birds, and in the dreary winter-time he was often obliged to content himself with a mouse, and live on very short commons, and with chattering teeth, to make his bed amongst the hard cold stones. And this certainly was very different from the princely mode of life to which he had been accustomed previous to his being driven into this wild

savage misery.

He had, however, one peculiarity, which was, that he only destroyed and devoured animals, and never desired to take human blood. Yet there was one after whose blood he did thirst, and that was the wicked woman who had transformed him; but she took very good care never to go where she might be within reach of that wolf's teeth. It must not, however, be supposed that the prince, who was now a wolf, still preserved human reason. No; all had grown dark within him, and under the form of the beast as which he was condemned to scour the forest, he had also very little more than brute understanding. It is true, a dim instinct often drew him towards the royal residence and its gardens, as though he had cause to expect that he should find prey there; but he had no clear remembrance of the past: how indeed should it have lasted under a wolf's skin? At those moments when he felt the impulse, he was always also seized with unusual fierceness; but as soon as he came within a thousand paces of the spot, a cold shudder passed through him and compelled him to retire. This was the effect of the queen's magic art, which enabled her to keep him banished from her to just that distance, and no further.

She, however, did all in her power to destroy him, and caused her attendants to hunt very frequently in the forest which surrounded the castle, thinking that it was most probable that he was still there. On this account, twice in almost every week, she caused noisy hunts and battues after wolves and foxes to be held there; and, as a pretext for these, she kept a great many pretty deer there, of which our royal wolf did not fail to devour as many as he could catch. He, however, always contrived to escape the danger, although the dogs often had their claws in the hair of his back, and the hunters aimed many a shot at him. He concealed himself for the moment, and when the noise ceased and the bugles no longer resounded, he returned to the thicket, which was close to the castle, and lay in the sunny spots where, as a boy and youth, he had often played. Still he knew nothing of the past, but it was a mysterious love that drew him thither.

The Princess Aurora as we have said had flown up into a tree, being transformed into a nightingale. But her soul had not become dark beneath its light feathery garb, like the prince's within the wolf's hide; and she knew much more than he, both of her own self and of men, only she was deprived of the power of speech. But she sang all the more sweetly in her solitude, and often so beautifully, that the beasts skipped and leaped with delight, and the birds gathered round her, and the trees and flowers rustled and bent their heads. I think the very stones might have danced had they but had the power to love, but their hearts were too cold. Men would soon have remarked the little bird, and much talk would have arisen about her, but some secret power withheld them from entering the wood, so that they never heard the nightingale sing.

I have already related how the queen persecuted the poor royal wolf with hunts and battues, so that he was the innocent cause of great trouble and inconvenience to the whole wolvine family. As great evil too befel the little birds, and in those days of tyranny, it was a great misfortune to be born either a thrush, a linnet, or a nightingale, in the neighbourhood of the castle. For the queen, after the death of the king had thrown all the power into her own hands, suddenly pretended to have an illness of so peculiar a kind, that not only were the cries, cawing, and chattering of birds of prey insupportable to her, but even the sweetest twittering and warbling of the merry little birds affected her unpleasantly; and in order to make people believe this, she fainted on two occasions when she heard them sing.

This, however, was only a deception; her wicked aim was to kill the little nightingale, if by chance it should still frequent those groves and gardens. She knew full well that the little bird could not approach within a hundred paces of the castle, for she had cast her witch-spell upon her, as well as upon her brother. Under the pretext of this nervous sensibility to tender and delicate sounds, war was waged, not only against the pretty little royal nightingale, but against all the warblers in the vicinity. They were all proscribed and outlawed, and the queen's foresters and gamekeepers received the strictest orders to wage war against every feathered creature, and not to spare even the robin: no, nor the wren, at whom no sportsman ever before fired shot.

This terrible hatred of the queen's was a misfortune for the whole feathered race, not only for those which lived at large in the woods and groves, but even for those which were kept in the court-yards and houses. No feathered creature was to be found in the capital city, nor in the vicinity of the royal residence; for the people thought to pay court to the queen, and to win her favour, by imitating her caprices. There was a destruction of the feathered tribe, like another slaughter of the innocents. How many thousand canaries, goldfinches, linnets, and nightingales; nay, even how many parrots and cockatoos, from the East and West Indies, had their necks wrung! Discordant, or melodious throats, the chattering, and the silent, were all menaced with one fate; it became a crime to be born either a goose, or a turkey, or a hen; and the common domestic fowls grew as scarce as Chinese golden pheasants. If the queen had waged such war against the feathered race for another ten years, they would have quite died out of the country. Indeed, not only were all the birds murdered, but scarcely did a human being now take a walk in the wood, for fear of being suspected of going thither in hopes to hear the song of a bird.

And thus it was, that no one ever heard the wondrous song of the little nightingale, except here and there a solitary sportsman, and

these never spoke of it, lest they should be punished by the queen for not having shot it. And indeed, to the honour of the foresters it must be said, that most of them followed their own good disposition, and seldom shot any little bird, but they were obliged to fire through the forest till it rang again. And this prevented any singing, and indeed many birds withdrew from it altogether, on account of the incessant noise, and never returned. The little nightingale, however, whom heaven especially protected, so that she escaped all the plots against her life, could not forsake the green forest behind the castle, where, in her childhood, she had played, and skipped about, so that although she flew away as soon as the bugles sounded, and the halloos and hurrahs echoed through the wood, she always returned again. And although her little songs, as coming from a sad heart, were, for the most part, melancholy and plaintive, still it was pleasing to her to live so amongst the green trees, and gay flowers, and to sing something sweet to the moon and stars; and she was unhappy only during a few months in the year. This was the season when autumn approached, and she was obliged to go with the other nightingales into foreign climes until the return of spring.

The little feathered princess confined herself then mostly to the trees and meadows where she had sported as a child; or in later years, with companions of her own age, had twined wreaths and garlands; or in the happiest days of her life, had wandered in those solitudes with her beloved. Her favourite haunt was a spot where grew a thick green oak, which spread over a murmuring rivulet, and which served as a covert for the soft whispers of their love. In this place she often saw the wolf, who was also led thither by a dim feeling of the past, but she knew not that it was her unfortunate brother. Yet she grew attached to him, because he so often lay down and listened to her song as though he understood it; and she often pitied him for being a harsh and wild wolf, that could not flutter from bough to bough, like herself and other little birds. But now I must also tell of a man, who, in that solitary forest, was often a listener to the little nightingale. This man was the eastern prince, her destined bridegroom when she was yet a princess.

Whilst the old king yet lived, he loved this prince beyond all other men, because of his virtues and valour, and on his death-bed had recommended him to the queen as her counsellor and helper in all difficulties and dangers, and especially as a brave and experienced warrior. On this account, after the king's death, he had remained about the queen, solely for love of the departed. But he soon perceived that the queen hated him, and was even plotting against his life, so he suddenly withdrew from her court, and left the country. She, however, caused him to be pursued as a traitor and a fugitive, and sent forth a decree, proclaiming him an outlaw, by which every one was empowered to slay him, and bring his head, on which a high price was set, to the royal castle. But he escaped to his father's land,

which lay many hundred miles to the east of the queen's palace, and there dwelt with him. Still in his heart, he found no rest, and his grief for his vanished princess never subsided. A wonderful thing also came upon him, for once every year he disappeared, without any one being able to discover whither he went. He then saddled his horse, clad himself in obscure-looking armour, and rode off so that no one could trace his path. He felt himself impelled to enter the country of the queen who had outlawed him, and to visit that forest wherein the princess had disappeared. This powerful impulse seized him annually, just before the time when the princess had vanished, and he rode through wild, desolate, and remote places, until he reached the well-known spots, where he had once wandered with his betrothed. The green oak by the rivulet, was also his favourite place. There he passed fourteen nights in tears, and prayers, and lamentations for his beloved; by day, however, he concealed himself in the neighbouring thicket. There he had often seen and heard the little nightingale, and taken delight in her wonderful, and almost bird-surpassing song.

[Illustration]

Yet they knew nought of each other; and although the little bird always felt sadness, and longing in her heart, when the knight had ridden away, still she knew not wherefore, and her deep and languishing Tin! Tin! still resounded in his heart when he had returned to his father-land. It was, however, with him, as with most other men who love, or do something mysterious, which puzzles all around them, he was not conscious of his own secret. That he was impelled each year to ride stealthily away he knew full well--but wherefore he was so impelled, he knew not at all.

Now a long time had passed since the death of the king, and it was already the sixth year since the royal children had disappeared, and the queen lived in splendour and enjoyments, and caused the beasts to be hunted, and the birds to be shot, and was no less harsh and cruel to her subjects than to the wild inhabitants of the woods. She fancied herself almost omnipotent, and thought her good fortune and power would have no end. Still, ever since that day, she had never entered the forest, a secret terror had always withheld her. She, however, did not allow herself to dwell upon it, nor did she perceive that a magic spell was the real cause.

Now it came to pass that she had appointed a grand festival and banquet, to which were invited all the princes and princesses of the kingdom, and all the nobles and all the principal officials. In the afternoon a grand wolf hunt was to take place in the forest, at which the princes intreated her to be present. She hesitated a long while under all kinds of pretences, but at last she allowed herself to be persuaded. She, however, placed herself in a very high chariot, and bade three of her bravest warriors, completely armed, to seat

themselves beside her. She also commanded several hundred armed outriders to keep before and behind and by the side of the chariot, and a long train of carriages, full of lords and ladies, followed. The wolf was never out of her thoughts, but she said to herself: "Let the wolf come; nay, let a hundred wolves even come, this brave company will soon make an end of them." Thus does providence blind even the most far-seeing and cunning when they are ripe for punishment; for it had been foretold to her by other masters of her godless art, that she must beware of the sixth year. But of that she thought not then.

And it was a fair and cheerful spring day, and they went out into the forests with trumpets and horns, and the steeds neighed and the arms clashed, and the naked swords and spears glittered in the sun; but the queen outshone them all in her most splendid attire and all her jewels, as she sat enthroned in her high chariot. Already the chase had commenced with loud huzzas and hurrahs, and the clanging horns of the hunters and the baying of the dogs. Then a lion rushed before them followed by a boar; but they did not fear, and every man stood firm at his post, and they struck down the monsters. But ere long came a still more dreadful beast, which filled them all with alarm. A tremendous wolf rushed from the thicket upon the green plain, and howled so awfully, that hunters, dogs, and riders, all took flight. The wolf ran like an arrow from a bow; nay, he did not run, but flew between the men and horses, and not one of these remembered that he was armed with a bow, and a spear, and a sword, so dreadful was the aspect of the monster, and so terrifically did he open his foaming jaws. The queen, who saw him making towards her chariot, shrieked "Help! help!" The women screamed and fainted, many a man cowardly did the same. No one thought of obstructing the wolf's course, and with one spring, he threw himself on the chariot, tore from it the proud woman, and dyed his teeth and jaws in her blood. All the rest had fled, or stood at bay.

And oh, wonder! when they endeavoured to rally their courage in order to attack, the wolf was no more to be seen, but where he had just stood appeared the form of a handsome and armed young man! The men were astonished at the magic change, but some brandished their weapons as though they would attack him as a second monster. Then suddenly an ancient lord came forward from among them, the chancellor of the kingdom, and forbade them, crying aloud, "By my grey hairs I charge you, men, hold off! You know not whom you would strike;" and before they could collect their thoughts he lay prostrate on the ground before the young man and kissed his knees and hands, saying, "Welcome, thou noble blossom of a noble sire, who again art risen in thy beauty! And rejoice, oh nation; the son of thy lawful king is returned, and he is now your king!"

At these words many hastened round and recognised the prince, and hailed him as their lord, and then the rest followed their example.

They were full of terror, and astonishment, and joy, all at once, and thought no more of the demolished queen nor of the wolf; for that the prince had been the wolf they had no idea.

The young king desired them all to follow him to his father's castle; he also stopped the chase, and the horns and trumpets which just before had disturbed the woods, now resounded before him to celebrate his happy return. And when again he was within, and looked down from his father's turrets, tears filled his eyes, and he wept both in joy and sorrow; for he remembered now all his trouble and thought of the bitter past, which lay upon him like a heavy dream. Then suddenly all grew clear in his mind, and he was able to relate to the chancellor and the nobles of the kingdom what had befallen him, and that only by the heart's blood of the old wicked witch, who was called his step-mother and their queen, could he be restored to his own form. The report of this astonishing wonder immediately circulated through the city and amongst the whole nation; and they all rejoiced that their beloved king's son was restored to them, and that the queen, whom they hated, had been torn in pieces by the fangs of the wolf which she herself had created.

But as the prince gradually came to himself, and bethought himself of all that had occurred, it lay heavy on his heart where his beloved sister, the Princess Aurora, might be, and whether she also were concealed within the skin of some animal, or feathery covering. Then he remembered her melancholy bridal day. And he enquired of every one about her; but all were silent, for none could give him any information. Then he again became sad and full of care, but this care and sadness were soon changed into joy.

For when all the noise of the wolf-chase took place, the poor prince from the East was just then lying concealed in his thicket, and the charming little nightingale was silent, and hidden amongst the green leaves of her oak. But a mysterious sensation shot through her little heart as soon as the thirsty fangs of the wolf, her brother, were bathed in the queen's blood.

Now when the chase was over, and the forest again was still, and the sun had set, the prince came out of his dark recess, and leant sadly against the stem of the green oak, wetting the grass with his tears, as was his nightly custom; and his heart seemed more than usually oppressed with sorrow. The little bird in the branches, however, began to sing to him, as was her wont, and he fancied that she sang differently from before, and with more enigmatical significance, and almost in a human voice. And a shudder came over him, and in great agitation he exclaimed, looking up amongst the branches:--"Little bird, little bird, tell me, canst thou speak?"

And the little nightingale answered yes, just as human beings are wont

to answer, and wondered at herself that she was able to speak, and for joy she began to weep, and for a long time was silent. Then again she opened her little beak, and related to the man, in an audible human voice, the whole history of her transformation, and that of her brother, and by what a miracle he had again become a man. For in a moment all had become clear in her mind, as if a spirit had whispered it all to her.

The man exulted in his heart when he heard her tale, and he reflected much within him, and revolved many a plan; and the little bird frolicked and flew confidingly around him; yet although she now knew her own history, and what had occurred so well, she knew not in the least who he was. And he enticed the little bird, and caressed it, and fondled it, and intreated it to come with him, and he would place it in a garden where bloomed eternal spring, and where no falcon ever entered, and no one ever fired a shot. That would be far pleasanter than to flutter about in wild thickets, and have to tremble at the thought of winter, and of hunters and birds of prey. But the little bird would hear nothing of it, and praised freedom and her green oak, and twittered, and sang, and fluttered round the man, who took no heed, for he seemed plunged in other thoughts.

But see what were his thoughts! For before the little bird was aware, the man had caught her by her little feet, and hastily made off, threw himself on his horse, and flew full gallop as if pursued by a tempest to an inn which he knew in the city, not far from the castle, took there a solitary chamber, and shut himself up in it with his little bird. When the little bird saw him take out the key, and give other signs of its being her prison, she began to weep bitterly, and to implore him to let her fly; for she felt quite oppressed and wretched in the closed room, and could not but think of her green trees, and her cherished liberty. But the man took no notice of her tears and supplications, and would not let her fly.

Then the little bird grew angry, and began to transform herself into various shapes, in order to terrify the man, that he might open the doors and windows, and be glad that she should fly away. So she became in succession a tiger and lion, an otter, a snake, a scorpion, a tarantula, and at last a frightful dragon, which flew upon the man with poisonous tongue. But none of these frightened him in the least, but he kept his determination, and the little bird had all her trouble for nothing, and was obliged to become a bird again.

And the man stood in deep thought, for something he had read in ancient tales came into his mind. So he drew a knife from his pocket, and cut a gash in the little finger of his left hand, where the heart's blood flows most vigorously. And he smeared the blood on the little head and body of the bird, which he had no sooner done than the miracle was completed.

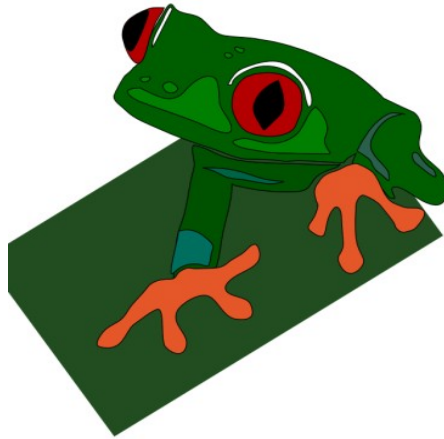
That very moment the little bird became a most lovely maiden, and the prince lay at her feet and kissed her hand, respectfully and submissively. The nightingale had now become the Princess Aurora, and recognised in the man her bridegroom, the prince from the land of the East. She was quite as young and beautiful as she was six years before, at the time of her transformation. For it is a peculiarity of transformations that the years during which persons are transformed do not add to their age, but a thousand years do not count for more than a second.

It is easy to imagine the joy of the pair; for when two loving hearts which have remained faithful to each other, meet again, after a long time, that is truly the greatest joy on earth. But they did not linger long together, but caused the king to be informed that two foreign princes from a distant land had arrived at his court, and requested his royal hospitality. Then the king went out to welcome them, and recognised his beloved sister Aurora, and his dear friend the prince from the land of the East, and was overjoyed; and the nation rejoiced with him, that all was restored as before, and that the kingdom no longer belonged to strangers.

After a few days he set the royal crown upon his head, and began to govern in his father's stead. He celebrated his sister's nuptials with the greatest magnificence, and there was dancing and feasting and knightly games. She and the prince also received from him a noble establishment both of land and attendants, so that they were able to live almost like kings. Aurora had, however, begged her brother to give her the wood, wherein as a bird she had fluttered through so many cheerful, and also sorrowful days, and this he willingly granted her. She built there a stately royal castle by the stream where she had so often sat and sung, and the thick green oak came into the centre of the palace-garden, and flourished yet many a year after her, so that her posterity still played beneath its shadow. She, however, caused a command to be issued that the wood should to all times be left in its natural majesty; she also gave peace to all little singing-birds, and forbade, in the strongest manner, traps or snares to be set within those sacred precincts, or that the little creatures should be molested in any way. And her brother reigned as a great and pious king, and she and her brave husband lived in happy love till they arrived at a snow-white age, and saw their children's children around them, till at length, accompanied by the blessing of God and men, they sank softly to sleep. It has been a custom ever since, amongst their children and descendants, that the eldest prince of their house should be christened Rossignol, and the eldest princess Philomela; for she desired to establish a pious recollection through all times of the marvellous misfortune that befel her when she was transformed into a nightingale. For Rossignol means, in fact, Rose-bird--the nightingales sing chiefly in the rose season--and Philomela, friend of song. The

word nightingale means, however, songstress of the night, and this is the best of all.

From: *Fairy Tales From all Nations*, by Anthony R. Montalba
EBook #34956



THE TREE FROG'S STORY

from: *Among the Meadow People*, by Clara Dillingham Pierson
EBook #34943

In all the meadow there was nobody who could tell such interesting stories as the old Tree Frog. Even the Garter Snake, who had been there the longest, and the old Cricket, who had lived in the farm-yard, could tell no such exciting tales as the Tree Frog. All the wonderful things of which he told had happened before he came to the meadow, and while he was still a young Frog. None of his friends had known him then, but he was an honest fellow, and they were sure that everything he told was true: besides, they must be true, for how could a body ever think out such remarkable tales from his own head?

When he first came to his home by the elm tree he was very thin, and looked as though he had been sick. The Katydid who stayed near said that he croaked in his sleep, and that, you know, is not what well and happy Frogs should do.

One day when many of the meadow people were gathered around him, he told them his story. "When I was a little fellow," he said, "I was strong and

well, and could leap farther than any other Frog of my size. I was hatched in the pond beyond the farm-house, and ate my way from the egg to the water outside like any other Frog. Perhaps I ought to say, 'like any other Tadpole,' for, of course, I began life as a Tadpole. I played and ate with my brothers and sisters, and little dreamed what trouble was in store for me when I grew up. We were all in a hurry to be Frogs, and often talked of what we would do and how far we would travel when we were grown.

"Oh, how happy we were then! I remember the day when my hind legs began to grow, and how the other Tadpoles crowded around me in the water and swam close to me to feel the two little bunches that were to be legs. My fore legs did not grow until later, and these bunches came just in front of my tail."

"Your tail!" cried a puzzled young Cricket; "why, you haven't any tail!"

"I did have when I was a Tadpole," said the Tree Frog. "I had a beautiful, wiggly little tail with which to swim through the waters of the pond; but as my legs grew larger and stronger, my tail grew littler and weaker, until there wasn't any tail left. By the time my tail was gone I had four good legs, and could breathe through both my nose and my skin. The knobs on the ends of my toes were sticky, so that I could climb a tree, and then I was ready to start on my travels. Some of the other Frogs started with me, but they stopped along the way, and at last I was alone.

"I was a bold young fellow, and when I saw a great white thing among the trees up yonder, I made up my mind to see what it was. There was a great red thing in the yard beside it, but I liked the white one better. I hopped along as fast as I could, for I did not then know enough to be afraid. I got close up to them both, and saw strange, big creatures going in and out of the red thing--the barn, as I afterward found it was called. The largest creatures had four legs, and some of them had horns. The smaller creatures had only two legs on which to walk, and two other limbs of some sort with which they lifted and carried things. The queerest thing about it was, that the smaller creatures seemed to make the larger ones do whatever they wanted them to. They even made some of them help do their work. You may not believe me, but what I tell you is true. I saw two of the larger ones tied to a great load of dried grass and pulling it into the barn.

"As you may guess, I stayed there a long time, watching these strange creatures work. Then I went over toward the white thing, and that, I found out, was the farm-house. Here were more of the two-legged creatures, but they were dressed differently from those in the barn. There were some bright-colored flowers near the house, and I crawled in among them. There I rested until sunset, and then began my evening song. While I was singing, one of the people from the house came out and found

me. She picked me up and carried me inside. Oh, how frightened I was! My heart thumped as though it would burst, and I tried my best to get away from her. She didn't hurt me at all, but she would not let me go.

"She put me in a very queer prison. At first, when she put me down on a stone in some water, I did not know that I was in prison. I tried to hop away, and--bump! went my head against something. Yet when I drew back, I could see no wall there. I tried it again and again, and every time I hurt my head. I tell you the truth, my friends, those walls were made of something which one could see through."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed all the meadow people; "wonderful, indeed!"

"And at the top," continued the Tree Frog, "was something white over the doorway into my prison. In the bottom were water and a stone, and from the bottom to the top was a ladder. There I had to live for most of the summer. I had enough to eat; but anybody who has been free cannot be happy shut in. I watched my chance, and three times I got out when the little door was not quite closed. Twice I was caught and put back. In the pleasant weather, of course, I went to the top of the ladder, and when it was going to rain I would go down again. Every time that I went up or down, those dreadful creatures would put their faces up close to my prison, and I could hear a roaring sound which meant they were talking and laughing.

"The last time I got out, I hid near the door of the house, and although they hunted and hunted for me, they didn't find me. After they stopped hunting, the wind blew the door open, and I hopped out."

"You don't say!" exclaimed a Grasshopper.

"Yes, I hopped out and scrambled away through the grass as fast as ever I could. You people who have never been in prison cannot think how happy I was. It seemed to me that just stretching my legs was enough to make me wild with joy. Well, I came right here, and you were all kind to me, but for a long time I could not sleep without dreaming that I was back in prison, and I would croak in my sleep at the thought of it."

"I heard you," cried the Katydid, "and I wondered what was the matter."

"Matter enough," said the Tree Frog. "It makes my skin dry to think of it now. And, friends, the best way I can ever repay your kindness to me, is to tell you to never, never, never, never go near the farm-house."

And they all answered, "We never will."

AN EASTER WITH PAREPA

by Myra S Delano, from *Standard Selections*

EBook #19926

When Parepa was here she was everywhere the people's idol. The great opera houses in all our cities and towns were thronged. There were none to criticise or carp. Her young, rich, grand voice was beyond compare. Its glorious tones are remembered with an enthusiasm like that which greeted her when she sung.

Her company played in New York during the Easter holidays, and I, as an old friend, claimed some of her leisure hours. We were friends in Italy, and this Easter day was to be spent with me.

At eleven in the morning she sang at one of the large churches; I waited for her, and at last we two were alone in my snug little room. At noon the sky was overcast and gray. Down came the snow, whitening the streets and roofs. The wind swept icy breaths from the water as it came up from the bay and rushed past the city spires and over tall buildings, whirling around us the snow and storm. We had hurried home, shut and fastened our blinds, drawn close the curtains, and piled coal higher on the glowing grate. We had taken off our wraps, and now sat close to the cheery fire for a whole afternoon's blessed enjoyment.

Parepa said, "Mary, this is perfect rest! We shall be quite alone for four hours."

"Yes, four long hours!" I replied. "No rehearsals, no engagements. Nobody knows where you are!"

Parepa laughed merrily at this idea.

"Dinner shall be served in this room, and I won't allow even the servant to look at you!" I said.

She clasped her dimpled hands together, like a child in enjoyment, and then sprang up to roll the little center-table near the grate.

The snow had now turned into sleet; a great chill fell over the whole city. We looked out of our windows, peeping through the shutters, and pitying the people as they rushed past.

A sharp rap on my door. John thrust in a note.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:--Can you come? Annie has gone. She said you would be sure to come to her funeral. She spoke of you to the last. She will be buried at four."

I laid the poor little blotted note in Parepa's hand. How it stormed! We looked into each other's faces helplessly. I said, "Dear, I must go, but you sit by the fire and rest. I'll be at home in two hours. And poor Annie has gone!"

"Tell me about it, Mary, for I am going with you," she answered.

She threw on her heavy cloak, wound her long white woolen scarf closely about her throat, drew on her woolen gloves, and we set out together in the wild Easter storm.

Annie's mother was a dressmaker, and sewed for me and my friends. She was left a widow when her one little girl was five years old. Her husband was drowned off the Jersey coast, and out of blinding pain and loss and anguish had grown a sort of idolatry for the delicate, beautiful child whose brown eyes looked like the young husband's.

For fifteen years this mother had loved and worked for Annie, her whole being going out to bless her one child. I had grown fond of them; and in small ways, with books and flowers, outings and simple pleasures, I had made myself dear to them. The end of the delicate girl's life had not seemed so near, though her doom had been hovering about her for years.

I had thought it all over as I took the Easter lilies from my window-shelf and wrapped them in thick papers and hid them out of the storm under my cloak. I knew there would be no other flowers in their wretched room. How endless was the way to this East-Side tenement house! No elevated roads, no rapid transit across the great city then as there are now. At last we reached the place. On the street stood the canvas-covered hearse, known only to the poor.

We climbed flight after flight of narrow dark stairs to the small upper rooms. In the middle of the floor stood a stained coffin, lined with stiff, rattling cambric and cheap gauze, resting on uncovered trestles of wood.

We each took the mother's hand and stood a moment with her, silent. All hope had gone out of her face. She shed no tears, but as I held her cold hand I felt a shudder go over her, but she neither spoke nor sobbed.

The driving storm had made us late, and the plain, hard-working people sat stiffly against the walls. Some one gave us chairs and we sat close to the mother.

The minister came in, a blunt, hard-looking man, self-sufficient and formal. A woman said the undertaker brought him. Icier than the pitiless storm outside, yes, colder than ice were his words. He read a few verses

from the Bible, and warned "the bereaved mother against rebellion at the divine decrees." He made a prayer and was gone.

A dreadful hush fell over the small room. I whispered to the mother and asked: "Why did you wait so long to send for me? All this would have been different."

With a kind of stare, she looked at me.

"I can't remember why I didn't send," she said, her hand to her head, and added: "I seemed to die, too, and forget, till they brought a coffin. Then I knew it all."

The undertaker came and bustled about. He looked at myself and Parepa, as if to say: "It's time to go." The wretched funeral service was over.

Without a word Parepa rose and walked to the head of the coffin. She laid her white scarf on an empty chair, threw her cloak back from her shoulders, where it fell in long, soft, black lines from her noble figure like the drapery of mourning. She laid her soft, fair hand on the cold forehead, passed it tenderly over the wasted delicate face, looked down at the dead girl a moment, and moved my Easter lilies from the stained box to the thin fingers, then lifted up her head, and with illumined eyes sang the glorious melody:

"Angels, ever bright and fair,
Take, oh! take her to thy care."

Her magnificent voice rose and fell in all its richness and power and pity and beauty! She looked above the dingy room and the tired faces of men and women, the hard hands and the struggling hearts. She threw back her head and sang till the choirs of paradise must have paused to listen to the Easter music of that day.

She passed her hand caressingly over the girl's soft dark hair, and sang on--and on--"Take--oh! take her to thy care!"

The mother's face grew rapt and white. I held her hands and watched her eyes. Suddenly she threw my hand off and knelt at Parepa's feet, close to the wooden trestles. She locked her fingers together, tears and sobs breaking forth. She prayed aloud that God would bless the angel singing for Annie. A patient smile settled about her lips, the light came back into her poor, dulled eyes, and she kissed her daughter's face with a love beyond all interpretation or human speech. I led her back to her seat as the last glorious notes of Parepa's voice rose triumphant over all earthly pain and sorrow.

And I thought that no queen ever went to her grave with a greater ceremony than this young daughter of poverty and toil, committed to the care of the angels.

That same night thousands listened to Parepa's matchless voice. Applause rose to the skies, and Parepa's own face was gloriously swept with emotion. I joined in the enthusiasm, but above the glitter and shimmering of jewels and dress, and the heavy odors of Easter flowers, the sea of smiling faces, and the murmur of voices, I could only behold by the dim light of a tenement window the singer's uplifted face, the wondering countenance of the poor on-lookers, and the mother's wide, startled, tearful eyes; I could only hear above the sleet on the roof and the storm outside Parepa's voice singing up to heaven: "Take, oh! take her to thy care!"

What is Good

"What is the real good?" I asked in musing mood.

Order, said the law court;

Knowledge, said the school;

Truth, said the wise man;

Pleasure, said the fool;

Love, said the maiden;

Beauty, said the page;

Freedom, said the dreamer;

Home, said the sage;

Fame, said the soldier;

Equity, the seer.

Spake my heart full sadly:

"The answer is not here."

Then within my bosom

Softly this I heard:

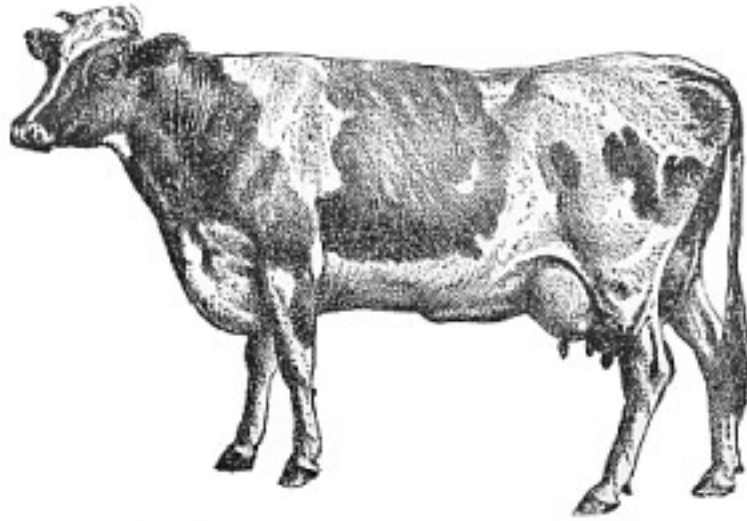
"Each heart holds the secret:

Kindness is the word."

John Boyle O'Reilly.

From *Poems Teachers Ask For*, Vol I, by Various

EBook #18909



WHEN THE COWS COME HOME

by Agnes E Mitchell, Ibid

With klinge, klange, klinge,
Way down the dusty dingle,
The cows are coming home;
Now sweet and clear and faint and low,
The airy tinklings come and go,
Like chimings from some far off tower,
Or patterings of some April shower
That makes the daisies grow;
Ko-ling, ko-lang, kolineleingle,
'Way down the darkening dingle
The cows come slowly home;
And old-time friends and twilight plays,
And starry nights and sunny days,
Come trooping up the misty ways
When the cows come home.

With jingle, jangle, jingle,
Soft tunes that sweetly mingle,
The cows are coming home.
Malvine and Pearl and Florimel,
Dekamp, Redrose and Gretchen Schnell,
Queen Bell and Sylph and Spangled Sue--
Across the fields I hear her "loo-oo"
And clang her silver bell;
Goling, golang, golingleingle,
With faint far sounds that mingle,
The cows come slowly home;

And mother-songs of long-gone years,
And baby joys and childish tears,
And youthful hopes and youthful fears,
When the cows come home.

With ringle, rangle, ringle,
By twos and threes and single
The cows are coming home.
Through violet air we see the town
And the summer sun a slipping down,
And the maple in the hazel glade
Throws down the path a longer shade,
And the hills are growing brown;
To-ring, to-rang, to-ringleringle,
By threes and fours and single
The cows are coming home;

The same sweet sound of wordless psalm,
The same sweet June-day rest and calm,
The same sweet scent of bud and balm,
When the cows come home.

With tinkle, tankle, tinkle,
Through fern and periwinkle
The cows are coming home;
A-loitering in the checkered stream
Where the sun-rays glance and gleam,
Clarine, Peachbloom and Phoebe Phillis
Stand knee-deep in the creamy lilies
In a drowsy dream;
To-link, to-lank, to-linklelinkle,
O'er banks with butter cups a-twinkle,
The cows come slowly home;
And up through memory's deep ravine
Come the brook's old song and its old-time sheen,
And the crescent of the silver queen,
When the cows come home.

With klinge, klange, klinge,
With loo-oo and moo-oo and jingle
The cows are coming home;
And over there in Merlin hill,
Hear the plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will;
The dew drops lie on the tangled vines,
And over the poplars Venus shines,
And over the silent mill;
Ko-ling, ko-lang, kolineleingle
With ting-a-ling and jingle

The cows come slowly home;
Let down the bars, let in the train
Of long-gone songs, and flowers and rain,
For dear old times come back again,
When the cows come home.

THE LAND OF LAUGHTER

by Angelina W. Grimke, from *The Upward Path*, by Various
EBook #31456

Once upon a time there were two dear little boys, and they were all alone in the world. They lived with a cruel old man and old woman, who made them work hard, very hard--all day, and beat them when they did not move fast enough, and always, every night, before they went to bed. They slept in an attic on a rickety, narrow bed, that went screech! screech! whenever they moved. And, in the summer, they nearly died with the heat up there; and in the winter with the cold.

One wintry night, when they were both weeping very bitterly after a particularly hard beating, they suddenly heard a pleasant voice saying:

"Why are you crying, little boys?"

They looked up, and there in the moonlight, by their bed, was the dearest little old lady. She was dressed all in grey, from the peak of her little pointed hat to her little, buckled shoes. She held a black cane much taller than her little self. Her hair fell about her ears in tiny, grey corkscrew curls; and they bobbed about as she moved. Her eyes were black and bright--as bright as--well, as that lovely, white light in the fire. And her cheeks were as red as an apple.

"Why are you crying, little boys?" she asked again, in a lovely, low, little voice.

"Because we are tired and sore and hungry and cold; and we are all alone in the world; and we don't know how to laugh any more. We should so like to laugh again."

"Why, that's easy," she said, "it's just like this," and she laughed a little, joyous, musical laugh. "Try!" she commanded.

They tried, but their laughing boxes were very rusty and they made horrid sounds.

"Well," she said, "I advise you to pack up, and go away, as soon as you can, to the Land of Laughter. You'll soon learn there, I can tell you."

"Is there such a land?" they asked doubtfully.

"To be sure there is," she answered, the least bit sharply.

"We never heard of it," they said.

"Well, I'm sure there must be plenty of things you never heard about," she said just the "leastest" bit more sharply. "In a moment you'll be telling me the flowers don't talk together, and the birds."

"We never heard of such a thing," they said in surprise, their eyes like saucers.

"There!" she said, bobbing her little curls. "What did I tell you. You have much to learn."

"How do you get to the Land of Laughter?" they asked.

"You go out of the eastern gate of the town, just as the sun is rising; and you take the highway there, and follow it; and if you go with it long enough, it will bring you to the gate of the Land of Laughter. It is a long, long way from here; and it will take you many days."

The words had scarcely left her mouth when, lo! the little lady disappeared, and where she had stood was the white square of moonlight--nothing else.

And without more ado these two little boys put their arms round each other, and fell fast asleep. And in the grey, just before daybreak, they awoke and dressed; and putting on their little ragged caps and mittens, for it was a wintry day, they stole out of the house, and made for the eastern gate. And just as they reached it and passed through, the whole east leapt into fire.

All day they walked, and many days thereafter; and kindly people, by the way, took them in and gave them food and drink and sometimes a bed at night. Often they slept by the roadside; but they didn't mind that for the climate was delightful--not too hot, and not too cold. They soon threw away their ragged little mittens.

They walked for many days; and there was no Land of Laughter. Once they met an old man, richly dressed, with shining jewels on his fingers, and he stopped them and asked:

"Where are you going so fast, little boys?"

"We are going to the Land of Laughter," they said very gravely.

"That," said the old man, "is a very foolish thing to do. Come with me and I will take you to the Land of Riches. I will cover you with beautiful garments, and give you jewels and a castle to live in with servants and horses and many things besides."

And they said to him, "No, we wish to learn how to laugh again; we have forgotten how, and we are going to the Land of Laughter."

"You will regret not going with me. See if you don't," he said, and he left them in quite a huff.

And they walked again, many days, and again they met an old man. He was tall and imposing-looking and very dignified. And he said:

"Where are you going so fast, little boys?"

"We are going to the Land of Laughter," they said together very seriously.

"What!" he said, "that is an extremely foolish thing to do. Come with me, and I will give you power. I will make you great men; generals, kings, emperors. Whatever you desire to accomplish will be permitted you."

And they said politely:

"Thank you, very much, but we have forgotten how to laugh; and we are going there to learn how."

He looked upon them haughtily, without speaking, and disappeared.

And they walked and walked more days; and they met another old man. And he was clad in rags; and his face was thin; and his eyes were unhappy. And he whispered to them:

"Where are you going so fast, little boys?"

"We are going to the Land of Laughter," they answered, without a smile.

"Laughter! laughter! that is useless. Come with me and I will show you the beauty of life through sacrifice, suffering for others. That is the only life. I come from the Land of Sacrifice."

And they thanked him kindly, but said:

"We have suffered enough. We have forgotten how to laugh. We would learn again." And they went on; and he looked after them wistfully.

They walked more days; and at last they came to the Land of Laughter. And how do you suppose they knew this? Because they could hear, over the wall, the sound of joyous laughter--the laughter of men, women and little children.

And one sat guarding the gate, and they went to her.

"We have come a long, long distance; and we would enter the Land of Laughter."

"Let me see you smile, first," she said gently. "I sit at the gate and no one who does not know how to smile may enter into the Land of Laughter."

And they tried to smile, but could not.

"Go away and practise," she said kindly, "and come back tomorrow."

And they went away, and practised all night how to smile; and, in the morning, they returned. And the gentle lady at the gate said:

"Dear little boys, have you learned how to smile?"

And they said: "We have tried. How is this?"

"Better," she said, "much better. Practise some more, and come back tomorrow."

And they went away obediently and practised.

And they came the third day. And she said:

"Now, try again."

And tears of delight came into her lovely eyes.

"Those were very beautiful smiles," she said. "Now you may enter."

And she unlocked the gate and kissed them both, and they entered the beautiful Land of Laughter.

Never had they seen such blue skies, such green trees and grass; never had they heard such bird song.

And people, men, women and children, laughing softly, came to meet them, and took them in, and made them at home; and soon, very soon, they learned to laugh. All day they laughed, and even in their sleep. And they grew up here, and married, and had laughing, happy children. And

sometimes they thought of the Land of Riches, and said, "Ah! well"; and sometimes of the Land of Power, and sighed a little; and sometimes of the Land of Sacrifice--and their eyes were wistful. But they soon forgot, and laughed again. And they grew old, laughing. And when they died--a laugh was on their lips. Thus are things in the beautiful Land of Laughter.



THE STORY OF TWO RACCOON CUBS AND TWO MAN CUBS

from: *South American Jungle Tales*, by Horacio Quiroga

EBook #46051

Once there was a mother raccoon who had three cubs; they all lived in the woods eating fruits and berries and birds' eggs. Whenever they were on a tree top and heard a noise, they would jump head foremost to the ground and scamper off with their tails in the air.

One day when the cubs had grown to be quite large sized raccoons, their mother took them up all together to the top of an orange tree--you must know that in South America orange trees, which came originally from Spain, now grow wild in the forest--and spoke to them as follows:

"Cublets, you are almost big enough to be called raccoons; and it is time you began to hunt for your meals by yourselves. It is very important for you to know how to do this, because, when you get to be old, you will go around all alone in the world, as all raccoons do. The oldest of you likes snails and cockroaches. He must hunt around woodpiles and under trunks of rotting trees, where there are always plenty of snails and cockroaches. The next to the oldest of you seems to like oranges. Up to the month of December there will be plenty of oranges right here in this grove. The youngest of you is always asking for birds' eggs. Well, there are birds' nests everywhere. All he will have to do is hunt. But one thing, however: he must never go down to the farm looking for eggs. It is very bad for raccoons to go near farms.

"Cublets, there is one thing more you must all be afraid of: dogs! dogs! Never go near a dog! Once I had a fight with a dog. Do you see this broken tooth? Well, I broke it in a fight with a dog! And so I know what I am talking about! And behind dogs come people, with guns, and the guns make a great noise, and kill raccoons. Whenever you hear a dog, or a man, or a gun, jump for your lives no matter how high the tree is, and run, run, run! If you don't they will kill you as sure as preaching!"

That is what the mother raccoon said to her cublets. Whereupon, they all got down from the tree top, and went each his own way, nosing about in the leaves from right to left and from left to right, as though they were looking for something they had lost. For that is the way raccoons hunt.

The biggest of the cubs, who liked snails and cockroaches, looked under every piece of dead wood he came to and overturned the piles of dead leaves. Soon he had eaten such a fine meal that he grew sleepy and lay down in a nice cozy bed of leaves and went to sleep. The second one, who liked oranges, did not move from that very grove. He just went from one tree to another eating the best oranges; and he did not have to jump from a tree top once; for neither men, nor dogs, nor guns, came anywhere near him.

But the youngest, who would have nothing but birds' eggs, had a harder time of it. He hunted and hunted over the hillsides all day long and found only two birds' nests--one belonging to a toucan, with three eggs in it, and the other belonging to a wood dove, with two eggs in it. Five tiny little eggs! That was not very much to eat for a raccoon almost big enough to go to school. When evening came the little cub was as hungry as he had been that morning; and he sat down, all cold and tired and lonesome, on the very edge of the forest.

From the place where he was sitting he could look down on the green fields of the farm, and he thought of what his mother had said about such places.

"Now, why did mamma say that? Why shouldn't I go looking for eggs down along those fences on the farm?"

And just as he was saying this all to himself, what should he hear but the song of a strange bird: "Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo"; coming from far, far away and from the direction of the farmhouse.

"My, did you ever hear a bird sing so loud?" said the cublet to himself. "What a big bird it must be! And its eggs must be the size of a cocoanut!"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo," came the bird's song again. The hungry little raccoon just couldn't do without one of those eggs the size of a

cocoanut. The bird was singing somewhere off to the right. So he made a short cut through the woods toward the field on the other side.

The sun was setting, but the raccoon cub ran with his tail in the air. At last he came to the edge of the woods, and looked down again into the fields.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo!"

Not far away now he could see the farmhouse. There was a man in the yard. The man was wearing long boots, and leading a horse by the bridle into a barn. On the fence in the barnyard, the little raccoon saw his bird.

"What a silly little 'coon I am," he said to himself. "That isn't a bird! That's a rooster! Mamma showed him to me one day, when we were on top of a big tree up in the woods. Roosters have a fine song; and they have a great many hens that lay sweet eggs. I think I could eat a dozen of those eggs, right now!"

For some time the little raccoon sat looking at the rooster and the barn and the farmhouse, and thinking of what his mother had said. But at last he thought: "Mamma is far away! She will never know"; and he made up his mind that as soon as it was dark he would run down to that hen coop and see what he could find.

Before long the sun had gone completely and it was so dark you could hardly see your hand before your face. Walking on tiptoe, the little raccoon came out from the shadow of the woods, and began making his way toward the farmhouse.

When he got into the yard, he stopped and listened carefully. Not a sound! The little raccoon was as happy as could be: he was going to eat a hundred, a thousand, two thousand of those eggs! He looked around for the hen coop. There it was! He stole up to the door and peered in.

On the ground, and right in front of the door, what should he see but an egg? And such a large egg! If it was not as big as a cocoanut, it was at least as big as an orange! And how brightly it shone in the dark! "Guess I'll keep that egg for dessert," thought the cub for a moment. But his mouth began to water and water, and he simply couldn't wait. He stepped up and put his front teeth into that egg. But--

Trac-c-c!

He had hardly touched it when there was a sharp snapping noise. The little raccoon felt a hard blow strike him in the face, while a stinging pain caught him in his right forepaw.

"Mamma! Mamma!" he called, jumping wildly this way and that. But he could not get his foot loose. He was caught in a trap! And just at that moment a dog began to bark!

All that time when the little raccoon had been waiting in the woods for night to come, so that he could go down to get his eggs in the hen coop, the man who owned the farmhouse had been playing with his children on the lawn in the yard. One of them was a little girl five years old; and the other was a little boy six years old. Both had golden hair. They were chasing their father about and falling down every so often on the grass. Then they would get up again and run some more. The man would also pretend to fall and the three of them were having a splendid time.

When it grew dark, the man said:

"Now let's go and set our trap in the hen coop, so that if the weasel comes to-night to kill our chickens and eat our eggs, we will catch him."

They went and set the trap. Then the family had dinner, and the little boy and the little girl were put to bed.

But they were both very much excited about the trap and the weasel. They could not sleep. Finally they sat up in their beds and began to throw pillows at each other. Their father and mother were reading down in the dining room. They heard what the children were doing; but they said nothing.

Suddenly the pillow-throwing stopped; and after a moment the little boy called:

"Papa! Papa! The weasel is in the trap. Don't you hear Tuké barking? Let us go too, papa!"

Tuké, you see, was the name of the dog!

Their father said they might, provided they put their shoes on. He would never let them go out at night, barefooted, for fear of coral or rattlesnakes.

So they went in their pajamas, just as they were.

And what, if you please, did they find in the trap? Their father stooped down in the doorway of the hen coop, holding Tuké back by the collar. When he stood up, he was holding a little raccoon by the tail; and the little raccoon was snapping and whistling and screaming "Mamma! Mamma!" in a sharp, shrill voice like a cricket's.

"Oh, don't kill him, papa! He is such a pretty little 'coon!" said the

boy and the girl. "Give him to us, and we will tame him!"

"Very well," said the father. "You may have him. But don't forget that raccoons drink water when they are thirsty, the same as little boys and girls."

He said this because once he had caught a wildcat and given it to them for a pet. They fed it plenty of meat from the pantry. But they didn't dream that it needed water. And the poor wildcat died.

The cage where the wildcat had been kept was still standing near the hen coop. They put the raccoon into the cage, and went back into the house. This time, when they went to bed, they fell fast asleep at once.

About midnight, when everything was still, the little raccoon, who had a very sore foot from the cuts made in it by the teeth of the trap, saw three shadows come creeping up toward his cage; for the moon was now shining faintly. They came closer and closer, moving softly and noiselessly over the ground. His heart gave a great leap when he discovered that it was his mother and his two brothers, who had been looking for him everywhere.

"Mamma! Mamma!" he began to cry from his cage, but soft-like, so as not to wake up the dog. "Here I am, here I am. Oh, get me out of here! I'm afraid! I'm afraid! Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!" The little raccoon was choking with tears!

The mother and the two brother raccoons were as happy as could be to find him! They rubbed their noses against him through the wires in the cage, and tried to stroke him with their paws. Then they set to work to get him out, if they could. First they examined the wiring of the cage, and one after another they worked at it with their teeth. But the wire was thick and tough, and they could do nothing with it. Then an idea came to the mother raccoon.

"People cut wires with files! Where can we get a file? A file is a long piece of iron with three sides, like the rattle of a rattlesnake. You push it away from you across the wire, and then you draw it toward you. Finally the wire breaks. Let's hunt around in the blacksmith shop, and we may find one."

They hurried off to the shop where the farmer kept his tools. Soon they found the file and came back with it to the cage. Thinking it must be very hard to file off a wire, they all took hold of the file and started pushing it back and forth between two of the wires. They pushed so hard that the cage began to shake all over and made a terrible noise. In fact, it made such a loud noise that Tuké woke up and set to barking at the top of his voice. The raccoons were frightened out of their wits; and for fear the dog might ask them where they got that file, they

scampered off, with their tails in the air, toward the forest.

The little boy and the little girl woke up very early in the morning to go to see their new pet, who had been brooding sadly in his cage all night long.

"What shall we call him?" asked the little boy.

"Seventeen," answered the little girl. "I can count to seventeen!"

And what did "Seventeen" have for breakfast? One of those hen's eggs he had tried so hard to get the night before. And after the hen's egg, a grasshopper, and then a piece of meat, and then a bunch of grapes and finally a lump of chocolate! By the end of the day, he was letting the two children reach their finger through the cage to scratch his head; and so pleased was he at all that was now happening to him that he liked being a prisoner in a cage almost as much as being a free raccoon cub on the mountain side. He was all taken up with the nice things that were placed in his coop for him to eat; and he liked those two yellow-headed children who kept coming to look at him!

That night and the following one, Tuké, the dog, slept so close to "Seventeen's" cage that when his mother and his two brothers came back to make another try at rescuing him, they did not dare approach. But on the third night everything was as it should be. They went directly to the shop, got the file, and hurried to the cage.

"But mamma," said the little raccoon, "I guess I'd rather stay where I am. They feed me all the eggs I want, and they are very kind to me. Today they told me that if I was good, they would soon let me go about the yard loose. There are two of them, with yellow hair. And they are man cubs, just as we are 'coon cubs. We shall have a fine time playing together."

The three wild raccoons were very sad to hear all this; but they made the best of it, and went away, just promising to come back and see "Seventeen" every night.

And so they did. Each evening, as soon as it was dark and whether it was fair or rainy, the mother raccoon came with her two cublets to see their little brother. He gave them bread and chocolate, which he handed out between the wires of his cage; and they ate it on the ground nearby.

In two weeks, he was let loose to run about the yard; and every night he went back to his cage of his own accord to sleep. He had his ears tweaked a number of times, when the farmer caught him too close to the hen coop; otherwise he had no trouble at all. The two children became much attached to him; and when the wild raccoons heard how kind those man cubs were to their little brother, they began to be as fond of them

as he was.

But one night, when it was very dark and very hot and a thunderstorm was gathering on the mountains, the wild raccoons called to "Seventeen" in vain. "Seventeen! Seventeen! Seventeen!" But he did not answer. In great alarm they crept up to the cage and looked in.

Pstt!

They drew back just in time. There in the door of the cage a big rattlesnake lay coiled. They had almost touched him with their noses. And now they knew why "Seventeen" failed to answer! The rattlesnake had bitten him and probably he was already dead.

The three raccoons decided they must first punish the rattlesnake. They rushed upon him from three directions and snipped his head off before he knew what they were about. Then they hurried inside the cage. "Seventeen" was lying there on the floor in a pool of blood, his feet up in the air, and his sides shaking as he panted for breath. They caressed him with their tongues and licked his body all over for more than a quarter of an hour. But it did no good. "Seventeen" finally opened his mouth and stopped breathing altogether. He was dead. Raccoons ordinarily are not much harmed by rattlesnake poison. Some other animals are not hurt at all. But this snake had bitten "Seventeen" right through an artery; and he had died, not of the poison, but from loss of blood.

The mother raccoon and her two cublets wept over his body for a long time; then, since they could do nothing further for him, they left the cage where he had been so happy and went back to the woods. But they kept thinking all the time: "What will the two man cubs say when they find that their little playmate is dead? They will probably be very, very sad and cry a long time!" They had grown to love the man cubs just from what "Seventeen" had said of them; and one thought was in their three heads--to relieve the sorrow of the two man cubs as best they could.

They talked the matter over earnestly; and at last they agreed to the following plan. The second youngest cublet looked almost like the raccoon who was dead. He had the same markings, was about the same size, and carried himself in much the same way. Why shouldn't he go and crawl into the cage, taking the place of his brother? The man cubs would probably be surprised; but nothing more. The four of them had talked about everything that went on at the farm so much, that the new raccoon could easily pretend he had been there all along. He might do it so well even, that the man cubs would not notice anything at all.

So they ran back to the cage, and the little raccoon took the place of his dead brother. The mother raccoon and her remaining cub took hold of "Seventeen" with their teeth and dragged him away off to the woods,

where they buried him under the leaves.

The next day, the man cubs were surprised at a number of strange habits "Seventeen" seemed to have learned during the night. But the new cub was just as affectionate to them as the real "Seventeen" had been; and they never guessed what had happened. The two man cubs played about with the raccoon cub all day long as usual; and at night the two wild raccoons came to pay their usual visit. The tame raccoon saved bits of his boiled eggs for them each time; and they would sit down and eat them on the ground in front of the cage. He told them all that happened at the farm; and they told him all the news about doings in the woods.



BOOTOOLGAH THE CRANE AND GOONUR THE KANGAROO RAT, THE FIRE MAKERS

from: *Australian Legendary Tales*, by K. Langloh Parker

EBook #3833

In the days when Bootoolgah, the crane, married Goonur, the kangaroo rat, there was no fire in their country. They had to eat their food raw or just dry it in the sun. One day when Bootoolgah was rubbing two pieces of wood together, he saw a faint spark sent forth and then a slight smoke. "Look," he said to Goonur, "see what comes when I rub these pieces of wood together--smoke! Would it not be good if we could make fire for ourselves with which to cook our food, so as not to have to wait for the sun to dry it?"

Goonur looked, and, seeing the smoke, she said: "Great indeed would be the day when we could make fire. Split your stick, Bootoolgah, and place in the opening bark and grass that even one spark may kindle a light." And hearing wisdom in her words, even as she said Bootoolgah did. And lo! after much rubbing, from the opening came a small flame. For as Goonur had said it would, the spark lit the grass, the bark smouldered and smoked, and so Bootoolgah the crane, and Goonur the kangaroo rat, discovered the art of fire making.

"This we will keep secret," they said, "from all the tribes. When we make a fire to cook our fish we will go into a Bingahwingul scrub. There we will make a fire and cook our food in secret. We will hide our firesticks in the openmouthed seeds of the Bingahwinguls; one firestick we will carry always hidden in our comebee."

Bootoolgah and Goonur cooked the next fish they caught, and found it very good. When they went back to the camp they took some of their cooked fish with them. The blacks noticed it looked quite different from the usual sun-dried fish, so they asked: "What did you do to that fish?"

"Let it lie in the sun," said they.

"Not so," said the others.

But that the fish was sun-dried Bootoolgah and Goonur persisted. Day by day passed, and after catching their fish, these two always disappeared, returning with their food looking quite different from that of the others. At last, being unable to extract any information from them, it was determined by the tribe to watch them. Booloorai, the night owl, and Quarrian, the parrot, were appointed to follow the two when they disappeared, to watch where they went, and find out what they did. Accordingly, after the next fish were caught, when Bootoolgah and Goonur gathered up their share and started for the bush, Booloorai and Quarrian followed on their tracks. They saw them disappear into a Bingahwingul scrub, where they lost sight of them. Seeing a high tree on the edge of the scrub, they climbed up it, and from there they saw all that was to be seen. They saw Bootoolgah and Goonur throw down their load of fish, open their comebee and take from it a stick, which stick, when they had blown upon it, they laid in the midst of a heap of leaves and twigs, and at once from this heap they saw a flame leap, which flame the fire makers fed with bigger sticks. Then, as the flame died down, they saw the two place their fish in the ashes that remained from the burnt sticks. Then back to the camp of their tribes went Booloorai and Quarrian, back with the news of their discovery. Great was the talk amongst the blacks, and many the queries as to how to get possession of the comebee with the fire stick in it, when next Bootoolgah and Goonur came into the camp. It was at length decided to

hold a corroboree, and it was to be one on a scale not often seen, probably never before by the young of the tribes. The grey beards proposed to so astonish Bootoolgah and Goonur as to make them forget to guard their precious comebee. As soon as they were intent on the corroboree and off guard, some one was to seize the comebee, steal the firestick and start fires for the good of all. Most of them had tasted the cooked fish brought into the camp by the fire makers and, having found it good, hungered for it. Beeargah, the hawk, was told to feign sickness, to tie up his head, and to lie down near wherever the two sat to watch the corroboree. Lying near them, he was to watch them all the time, and when they were laughing and unthinking of anything but the spectacle before them, he was to steal the comebee. Having arranged their plan of action, they all prepared for a big corroboree. They sent word to all the surrounding tribes, asking them to attend, especially they begged the Bralgahs to come, as they were celebrated for their wonderful dancing, which was so wonderful as to be most likely to absorb the attention of the firemakers.

All the tribes agreed to come, and soon all were engaged in great preparations. Each determined to outdo the other in the quaintness and brightness of their painting for the corroboree. Each tribe as they arrived gained great applause; never before had the young people seen so much diversity in colouring and design. Beeleer, the Black Cockatoo tribe, came with bright splashes of orange-red on their black skins. The Pelicans came as a contrast, almost pure white, only a touch here and there of their black skin showing where the white paint had rubbed off. The Black Divers came in their black skins, but these polished to shine like satin. Then came the Millears, the beauties of the Kangaroo Rat family, who had their home on the morillas. After them came the Buckandeer or Native Cat tribe, painted in dull colours, but in all sorts of patterns. Mairas or Paddymelons came too in haste to take part in the great corroboree. After them, walking slowly, came the Bralgahs, looking tall and dignified as they held up their red heads, painted so in contrast to their French-grey bodies, which they deemed too dull a colour, unbrightened, for such a gay occasion. Amongst the many tribes there, too numerous to mention, were the rose and grey painted Galabs, the green and crimson painted Billai; most brilliant were they with their bodies grass green and their sides bright crimson, so afterwards gaining them the name of crimson wings. The bright little Gidgereegahs came too.

Great was the gathering that Bootoolgah, the crane, and Goonur, the kangaroo rat, found assembled as they hurried on to the scene. Bootoolgah had warned Goonur that they must only be spectators, and take no active part in the corroboree, as they had to guard their comebee. Obedient to his advice, Goonur seated herself beside him and slung the comebee over her arm. Bootoolgah warned her to be careful and not forget she had it. But as the corroboree went on, so absorbed did she become that she forgot the comebee, which slipped from her arm.

Happily, Bootoolgah saw it do so, replaced it, and bade her take heed, so baulking Beeargah, who had been about to seize it, for his vigilance was unceasing, and, deeming him sick almost unto death, the two whom lie was watching took no heed of him. Back he crouched, moaning as he turned, but keeping ever an eye on Goonur. And soon was he rewarded. Now came the turn of the Bralgahs to dance, and every eye but that of the watchful one was fixed on them as slowly they came into the ring. First they advanced, bowed and retired, then they repeated what they had done before, and again, each time getting faster and faster in their movements, changing their bows into pirouettes, craning their long necks and making such antics as they went through the figures of their dance, and replacing their dignity with such grotesqueness, as to make their large audience shake with laughter, they themselves keeping throughout all their grotesque measures a solemn air, which only seemed to heighten the effect of their antics.

And now came the chance of Beeargah the hawk. In the excitement of the moment Goonur forgot the comebee, as did Bootoolgah. They joined in the mirthful applause of the crowd, and Goonur threw herself back helpless with laughter. As she did so the comebee slipped from her arm. Then up jumped the sick man from behind her, seized the comebee with his combo, cut it open, snatched forth the firestick, set fire to the heap of grass ready near where he had lain, and all before the two realised their loss. When they discovered the precious comebee was gone, up jumped Bootoolgah and Goonur. After Beeargah ran Bootoolgah, but Beeargah had a start and was fleeter of foot, so distanced his pursuer quickly. As he ran he fired the grass with the stick he still held. Bootoolgah, finding he could not catch Beeargah, and seeing fires everywhere, retired from the pursuit, feeling it was useless now to try and guard their secret, for it had now become the common property of all the tribes there assembled.

ALPHEGE, OR THE GREEN MONKEY

from: *The Yellow Fairy Book*, by Various

Etext #640

Many years ago there lived a King, who was twice married. His first wife, a good and beautiful woman, died at the birth of her little son, and the King her husband was so overwhelmed with grief at her loss that his only comfort was in the sight of his heir.

When the time for the young Prince's christening came the King chose as godmother a neighbouring Princess, so celebrated for her wisdom and goodness that she was commonly called 'the Good Queen.' She named the baby Alphege, and from that moment took him to her heart.

Time wipes away the greatest griefs, and after two or three years the King married again. His second wife was a Princess of undeniable beauty, but by no means of so amiable a disposition as the first Queen. In due time a second Prince was born, and the Queen was devoured with rage at the thought that Prince Alphege came between her son and the throne. She took care however to conceal her jealous feelings from the King.

At length she could control herself no longer, so she sent a trusty servant to her old and faithful friend the Fairy of the Mountain, to beg her to devise some means by which she might get rid of her stepson.

The Fairy replied that, much as she desired to be agreeable to the Queen in every way, it was impossible for her to attempt anything against the young Prince, who was under the protection of some greater Power than her own.

The 'Good Queen' on her side watched carefully over her godson. She was obliged to do so from a distance, her own country being a remote one, but she was well informed of all that went on and knew all about the Queen's wicked designs. She therefore sent the Prince a large and splendid ruby, with injunctions to wear it night and day as it would protect him from all attacks, but added that the talisman only retained its power as long as the Prince remained within his father's dominions. The Wicked Queen knowing this made every attempt to get the Prince out of the country, but her efforts failed, till one day accident did what she was unable to accomplish.

The King had an only sister who was deeply attached to him, and who was married to the sovereign of a distant country. She had always kept up a close correspondence with her brother, and the accounts she heard of Prince Alphege made her long to become acquainted with so charming a nephew. She entreated the King to allow the Prince to visit her, and after some hesitation which was overruled by his wife, he finally consented.

Prince Alphege was at this time fourteen years old, and the handsomest and most engaging youth imaginable. In his infancy he had been placed in the charge of one of the great ladies of the Court, who, according to the prevailing custom, acted first as his head nurse and then as his governess. When he outgrew her care her husband was appointed as his tutor and governor, so that he had never been separated from this excellent couple, who loved him as tenderly as they did their only daughter Zayda, and were warmly loved by him in return.

When the Prince set forth on his travels it was but natural that this devoted couple should accompany him, and accordingly he started with them and attended by a numerous retinue.

For some time he travelled through his father's dominions and all went well; but soon after passing the frontier they had to cross a desert plain under a burning sun. They were glad to take shelter under a group of trees near, and here the Prince complained of burning thirst. Luckily a tiny stream ran close by and some water was soon procured, but no sooner had he tasted it than he sprang from his carriage and disappeared in a moment. In vain did his anxious followers seek for him, he was nowhere to be found.

As they were hunting and shouting through the trees a black monkey suddenly appeared on a point of rock and said: 'Poor sorrowing people, you are seeking your Prince in vain. Return to your own country and know that he will not be restored to you till you have for some time failed to recognise him.'

With these words he vanished, leaving the courtiers sadly perplexed; but as all their efforts to find the Prince were useless they had no choice but to go home, bringing with them the sad news, which so greatly distressed the King that he fell ill and died not long after.

The Queen, whose ambition was boundless, was delighted to see the crown on her son's head and to have the power in her own hands. Her hard rule made her very unpopular, and it was commonly believed that she had made away with Prince Alphege. Indeed, had the King her son not been deservedly beloved a revolution would certainly have arisen.

Meantime the former governess of the unfortunate Alphege, who had lost her husband soon after the King's death, retired to her own house with her daughter, who grew up a lovely and most loveable girl, and both continued to mourn the loss of their dear Prince.

The young King was devoted to hunting, and often indulged in his favourite pastime, attended by the noblest youths in his kingdom.

One day, after a long morning's chase he stopped to rest near a brook in

the shade of a little wood, where a splendid tent had been prepared for him. Whilst at luncheon he suddenly spied a little monkey of the brightest green sitting on a tree and gazing so tenderly at him that he felt quite moved. He forbade his courtiers to frighten it, and the monkey, noticing how much attention was being paid him, sprang from bough to bough, and at length gradually approached the King, who offered him some food. The monkey took it very daintily and finally came to the table. The King took him on his knees, and, delighted with his capture, brought him home with him. He would trust no one else with its care, and the whole Court soon talked of nothing but the pretty green monkey.

One morning, as Prince Alphege's governess and her daughter were alone together, the little monkey sprang in through an open window. He had escaped from the palace, and his manners were so gentle and caressing that Zayda and her mother soon got over the first fright he had given them. He had spent some time with them and quite won their hearts by his insinuating ways, when the King discovered where he was and sent to fetch him back. But the monkey made such piteous cries, and seemed so unhappy when anyone attempted to catch him, that the two ladies begged the King to leave him a little longer with them, to which he consented.

One evening, as they sat by the fountain in the garden, the little monkey kept gazing at Zayda with such sad and loving eyes that she and her mother could not think what to make of it, and they were still more surprised when they saw big tears rolling down his cheeks.

Next day both mother and daughter were sitting in a jessamine bower in the garden, and they began to talk of the green monkey and his strange ways. The mother said, 'My dear child, I can no longer hide my feelings from you. I cannot get the thought out of my mind that the green monkey is no other than our beloved Prince Alphege, transformed in this strange fashion. I know the idea sounds wild, but I cannot get it out of my heart, and it leaves me no peace.'

As she spoke she glanced up, and there sat the little monkey, whose tears and gestures seemed to confirm her words.

The following night the elder lady dreamt that she saw the Good Queen, who said, 'Do not weep any longer but follow my directions. Go into your garden and lift up the little marble slab at the foot of the great myrtle tree. You will find beneath it a crystal vase filled with a bright green liquid. Take it with you and place the thing which is at present most in your thoughts into a bath filled with roses and rub it well with the green liquid.'

At these words the sleeper awoke, and lost no time in rising and hurrying to the garden, where she found all as the Good Queen had described. Then she hastened to rouse her daughter and together they prepared the bath, for they would not let their women know what they

were about. Zayda gathered quantities of roses, and when all was ready they put the monkey into a large jasper bath, where the mother rubbed him all over with the green liquid.

Their suspense was not long, for suddenly the monkey skin dropped off, and there stood Prince Alphege, the handsomest and most charming of men. The joy of such a meeting was beyond words. After a time the ladies begged the Prince to relate his adventures, and he told them of all his sufferings in the desert when he was first transformed. His only comfort had been in visits from the Good Queen, who had at length put him in the way of meeting his brother.

Several days were spent in these interesting conversations, but at length Zayda's mother began to think of the best means for placing the Prince on the throne, which was his by right.

The Queen on her side was feeling very anxious. She had felt sure from the first that her son's pet monkey was no other than Prince Alphege, and she longed to put an end to him. Her suspicions were confirmed by the Fairy of the Mountain, and she hastened in tears to the King, her son.

'I am informed,' she cried, 'that some ill-disposed people have raised up an impostor in the hopes of dethroning you. You must at once have him put to death.'

The King, who was very brave, assured the Queen that he would soon punish the conspirators. He made careful inquiries into the matter, and thought it hardly probable that a quiet widow and a young girl would think of attempting anything of the nature of a revolution.

He determined to go and see them, and to find out the truth for himself; so one night, without saying anything to the Queen or his ministers, he set out for the palace where the two ladies lived, attended only by a small band of followers.

The two ladies were at the moment deep in conversation with Prince Alphege, and hearing a knocking so late at night begged him to keep out of sight for a time. What was their surprise when the door was opened to see the King and his suite.

'I know,' said the King, 'that you are plotting against my crown and person, and I have come to have an explanation with you.'

As she was about to answer Prince Alphege, who had heard all, came forward and said, 'It is from me you must ask an explanation, brother.' He spoke with such grace and dignity that everyone gazed at him with mute surprise.

At length the King, recovering from his astonishment at recognising the brother who had been lost some years before, exclaimed, 'Yes, you are indeed my brother, and now that I have found you, take the throne to which I have no longer a right.' So saying, he respectfully kissed the Prince's hand.

Alphege threw himself into his arms, and the brothers hastened to the royal palace, where in the presence of the entire court he received the crown from his brother's hand. To clear away any possible doubt, he showed the ruby which the Good Queen had given him in his childhood. As they were gazing at it, it suddenly split with a loud noise, and at the same moment the Wicked Queen expired.

King Alphege lost no time in marrying his dear and lovely Zayda, and his joy was complete when the Good Queen appeared at his wedding. She assured him that the Fairy of the Mountain had henceforth lost all power over him, and after spending some time with the young couple, and bestowing the most costly presents on them, she retired to her own country.

King Alphege insisted on his brother sharing his throne, and they all lived to a good old age, universally beloved and admired.

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